



# Electronic mentoring for Paediatric Therapists in BC, Canada

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## Background

Recruitment and retention of paediatric therapists is difficult in British Columbia especially in isolated locations. Geographical location may inhibit a therapist's ability for professional development and this isolation makes the professional development even more important. In response to these issues Sunny Hill Health Centre and the Office of the Provincial Paediatric Therapy Recruitment and Retention Coordinator (PPTRRC) has developed an electronic mentoring program for physiotherapists, occupational therapists and occupational therapists.

## Mentors

Mentors must be able to facilitate collaborative learning and collegial discussion which are vital skills in promoting learning and enabling the reflective process to occur. The e-mentoring relationship needs to be characterized by collegiality and sharing of knowledge between professionals. Mentors facilitate professional development, motivation, self confidence, self esteem clinical reasoning and independent thinking. Mentors need to know how to lead the mentee towards discovering their questions without telling them the answers.

## Pool of Trained Electronic Mentors

Potential electronic mentors must take an electronic mentoring course which consists of four web based modules. These modules teach reflective learning, types of mentorship, establishing electronic relationships and the use of technology. Potential mentors are selected from this pool of trained mentors.

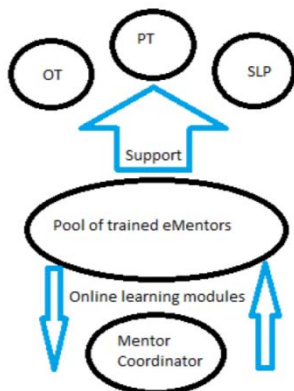


Figure 1: Program structure

\* Stewart S, Carpenter C (2009) Electronic Mentoring: An innovative approach to providing clinical support. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*. 16 (4):199-206



Figure 2: The yellow lines depict eMentor dyads. Vancouver to Powell River, Vancouver to Williams Lake, Summerland to Burns Lake, Abbotsford to Penticton, and Abbotsford to Duncan. Map credit: Foundlocally.com

## Procedure

A mentor coordinator trains the new mentors, matches the mentee and mentor, maintains the relationship with the mentors, mentees and the employers, and evaluates the program. The new mentor relationship can be initiated by a potential mentee or the mentee's employer. Contract and costs are all outlined at <http://www.therapybc.ca/eMentoring.php>

## Findings

### Improved confidence and critical reasoning

"The electronic mentoring allowed me to reflect on my own instead of asking right away... It decreased the sense of being overwhelmed and second guessing." (mentee)

### Allows the mentee to feel supported

"You can ask all the questions you have and there are no dumb ones. Its great to know that you have someone there who is willing to help you out with your practice and it is not putting great pressure on their work load. Feels good." (mentee)

## Findings

### Excellent tool for knowledge translation

"This is an excellent forum for therapists to discuss new ideas in therapy which they have learned through reading or conferences attended." (mentor)

### Improved clinical reasoning

"My critical reasoning really improved because during Ichat you have to think it all out, all together. You may look at the whole situation and feel really overwhelmed but by talking things through you are able to focus better." (mentee)

## Successes

Rural employers in British Columbia who traditionally have had difficulty in recruiting pediatric therapists are starting to use electronic mentoring as both a recruitment and retention tool for new staff. Two new University of British Columbia graduates have eMentoring support as part of their new job contracts. Three mentor/mentee relationships have been completed and there are two mentee/mentor relationships presently underway.



Figure 3: Sue Stewart, Mentor Coordinator, facilitating an eMentoring session

## Acknowledgments

The Office of the PPTRRC would like to sincerely thank all therapists who have participated in the eMentoring program and related pilots.

## For Further Information

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